

## Senate Bill 58 - Information Testimony

April 8, 2013

To: House Appropriations Committee, Duane Ankney, Chair

Re: Testimony by the Montana Children's Trust Fund Board regarding **SB 58**.

My name is Betty Hidalgo and I am speaking as a private citizen.

We are privileged and honored to be here at the request of Senator Christine Kaufman regarding the result of SJR 30 study plan reviewing childhood trauma in Montana. One of the outcomes of SJR 30 was the recommendations in Senate Bill 58.

The Montana's Children's Trust Fund Board supports grants for parental education and support in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The Children's Trust Fund Board has been and is currently implementing the five proactive factors that address parent education and support, in prevention of adverse childhood trauma in all of their grants. The foundation for our programs are evidenced based and utilize the five protective factors which are:

1. Parental resiliency
2. Social Connections
3. Concrete Support
4. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children

The Children's Trust Fund Board is in concert with the SJR 30 report supporting the fact that childhood trauma is a public health issue. Adverse childhood experiences is childhood trauma that is understood as a range of experiences that include being abused or neglected, witnessing domestic violence, growing up with substance abuse, mental illness, parental discord or crime in the home. Chronic adversity, abuse and neglect in the first 3 years can permanently alter brain functioning....what is learned at these ages cannot be unlearned. Research show that a range of negative events can especially from birth to 3 years of age stunt and alter neurological development. Studies demonstrate three levels of stress response in children: positive, tolerable and toxic.

The SJR 30 study noted these problems can be prevented especially through prenatal care, prenatal education, family education and support and other efforts to prevent or to mitigate childhood trauma. SJR 30 stressed finding that unaddressed childhood trauma affects a child's behaviors later in life and can lead to problems such as poor physical health, addiction and mental illness.

If funded the Children's Trust Fund Board would increase grants for parent education and support for their children.

Most of us parent how we have been parented ourselves. Everyone here is aware of incidents that are tragic for our children and their families. This crosses ALL boundaries, whether it is in our own families or those of friends and neighbors. There are approximately 222,000,000 children in Montana. We owe a safe and loving environment to every child. It is their future and our future. Children and their families are bipartisan.

The Children's Trust Fund Board has the capacity to expand to cover the projects and programs if this bill is funded.

Thank you for the trust in being the voice for those that cannot speak. We are honored for this opportunity to serve our children and their families.

Betty Hidalgo